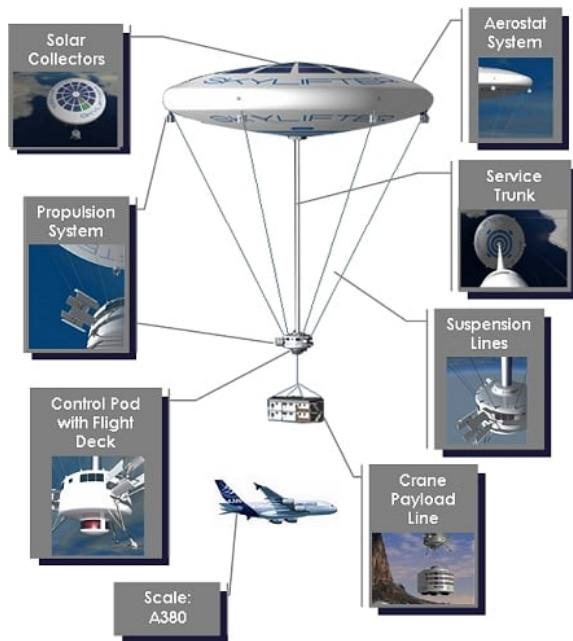


Thermo-Skyships



In May 1980, Airship Developments was acquired by Thermo-Skyships Ltd., a firm that had been working on lenticular airship designs (dubbed "flying saucers") that would have used heating of the lifting gas to control buoyancy. The resulting firm was known as Airship Industries Ltd. During the approximately two-and-a-half years the Thermo-Skyships team spent at AI, it proposed several abortive designs, for non-lenticular rigid airships



Skylifter: The aircraft would consist of three main sections. Floating at the top would be the symmetrical discus aerostat, which is a fancy way of saying "saucer-shaped balloon." It would be permanently filled with lighter-than-air gas. Hanging on suspension lines below it would be the cylindrical control pod, with the two-pilot flight deck mounted on the bottom. Cargo would hang from cables below that.

Propulsion

Biodiesel engines, augmented by solar panels on top of the balloon, would generate electricity to power three propellers mounted on the sides of the control pod. The propellers would be cycloidal, meaning that the blades would be arranged horizontally. The main advantage of such propellers would be that they could be rapidly controlled via a helicopter-style collective – this would definitely come in handy for the precise maneuvering involved in the collecting and depositing of cargo.

The airship would have an estimated cruising air speed of 45 knots (83 km/h or 52mph), and a range of at least 2,000 kilometers (1,243 miles).